

Date: 27th February-2025

TEACHING WRITING

Gofurova Dilafruz Oybekovna

an English teacher of Jizzakh academic lyceum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract: Writing is a complex activity. Understanding this complexity is the key to effective teaching of writing. In this chapter, I will present a brief historical overview of various approaches to teaching writing, including the controlled approach, process approach, and genre approach. Essential to implementing these approaches is understanding the recursive nature of the writing process and knowing what constitutes competent writing. Indeed, writing competence encompasses not only word choices, sentence variations, punctuation choices, and other linguistic tools for cohesion and coherence, but also ways to structure and develop arguments at the micro and macro levels. It is important to adopt a writing pedagogy that explicitly trains students in the kinds of thinking processes that are conducive to good writing. To this end, this chapter presents the socio-cognitive approach to teaching writing. I will discuss guiding principles and pedagogical implications of the approach. I will also highlight strategies for enhancing the quality of second language writing, drawing upon insights from the literature of writing research.

Keywords: Second language writing, recursive nature, cohesion and coherence, thinking processes, macro-rhetorical goal, socio-cognitive approach.

Introduction

When I teach the Second Language Academic Writing course to English majors at my university, I often learn from my pre-service student teachers that they are unaware of the various approaches to teaching English-as-a-second-language writing. This is not surprising perhaps, as many pre-service teachers are trained as English Language teachers, rather than writing teachers (Cheung, 2011; Lee, 2008). Many of us learn how to teach writing through imitating our favourite writing teachers, or through mentorship by senior colleagues in our workplace.

Nevertheless, it may be beneficial for teachers to have a systematic understanding of different approaches to teaching academic writing. There have been paradigm shifts in approaches to teaching academic writing over the last few decades (Paltridge, Harbon, Hirsh, Shen, Stevenson, Phakiti, & Woodrow, 2009). From the mid-1940s to mid-1960s, controlled composition was practiced widely in writing classes. Such a teaching approach aims to improve the accuracy of students' written works, based on a behaviorist view that repetition and imitation will lead to habit formation (e.g., writing grammatically correct sentences). An example of controlled composition is for teachers to give sample sentences of a chosen structure, and then students are tasked to write a few sentences following that pattern. Later in the mid-1960s, English Language teachers realized that



Date: 27th February-2025

students needed to focus not only on grammatical accuracy of the sentences they produced but also the functions of writing. Thus, teachers adopted a rhetorical function approach where they shifted the teaching focus from sentence level accuracy to a discourse level that emphasized the purposes of writing such as description, comparison, and contrast. Since the 1970s, the process approach to writing has gained popularity. Instead of focusing primarily on the form/correctness of the writing, teachers now encourage students to pay attention to macro-level communicative purposes. The aim of the process approach is to let the students' ideas decide the form of a piece of writing (Silva, 1990).

Given that writing is socially-situated in nature, yet another approach to writing instruction was introduced to help students acquire the genres that they needed to master in order to succeed in writing about specific topics. Under this genre approach, through reading model texts from a subject area and guided practice, students master the language, text structure, and discourse practices for specific kinds of communication. We should take note that understanding the genre approach depends on genre traditions, such as English for Specific Purposes (UK), New Rhetoric (USA), and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Australia). These three genre traditions differ in both form and function (Hyon, 1996).

Despite the variety of writing approaches that teachers have developed and adopted in their classrooms, a common underlying objective is to make sure that students recognize that they write in order to accomplish certain deliberate functions. Against this background, this chapter will present a practical approach to teaching writing. This approach manifests socio-cognitive pedagogy that explicitly trains students in key thinking processes that are conducive to developing and expressing ideas while considering their audience. Drawing upon insights from the literature of second language writing research, I will discuss guiding principles and pedagogical implications of the approach. I will also highlight basic but effective strategies for enhancing the quality of second language writing.

Second Language Writing

What makes a successful essay? In a study on various ways writers can write good essays, Crossley, Roscoe, and McNamara (2014) suggest that "Successful writing cannot be defined simply through a single set of predefined features. Rather, successful writing has multiple profiles" (p. 184). Specifically, some successful writers compose longer essays (Crossley, Weston, McLain Sullivan, & McNamara, 2011) with more infrequent vocabulary (McNamara, Crossley, & Roscoe, 2013), and fewer grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors (Ferrari, Bouffard, & Rainville, 1998). Other successful writers produce essays with more syntactically complex sentences (Crossley, et al., 2011) and with a better control of text cohesion (Crossley, et al., 2014). Hence, besides a basic goal to write texts accurately, free of grammatical errors, student authors should consider stylistic factors such as choice of words, sentence complexity, text cohesion, and length of their essays.

In fact, achieving good composition is a complex and difficult task for both native speakers and non-native speakers of English. Even if one writes in one's own language,



Date: 27th February-2025

discipline is requisite for precision and form; hence going through multiple revisions of drafts is the norm rather than exception. This difficulty to achieve the mastery of words, even if one is familiar with these words, was pointed out by Widdowson (1983, p. 34): For the moment let us note that getting the better of words in writing is commonly a very hard struggle. And I am thinking now of words which are in one's own language. The struggle is all the greater when they are not.

In order to teach writing effectively, teachers must therefore be explicitly cognizant of the skills and processes that are involved. This view treats writing as a profession, a qualification to be attained with discipline and hard work, rather than an innate ability or subconscious habit. Indeed, "even in one's native language, learning to write is something like learning a second language ... No one is a 'native speaker' of writing. For the most part, everyone learns to write at school" (Leki, 1992, p. 10). In other words, we need to let students know that few authors possess an in-born 'native' command of writing English as a lingua franca (Canagarajah, 2006). If students want to write well, they need to learn the skills explicitly and adopt deliberate strategies to enhance their writing competence.

In what follows, I will outline some of the skills that are basic to competence in writing. I will also discuss the non-linear process of academic writing that teachers can introduce to students in writing classrooms to raise their awareness of how writing develops. Then, I will suggest some practical methods for enhancing students' writing performance in second language classes.

Writing competence

Writing competence is about composing an effective piece of written work to fulfill a specific purpose. For example, when writing an entertaining and engaging story, students adopt a narrative style and rhetorical moves in order to fulfill the requirements of a specialized context (e.g., classroom practice, take-home assignment, or in-class examination). Once students are aware of the importance of the purpose, audience, and context of the writing, they can employ the following basic academic discourse skills to achieve effective implementation.

Paraphrase and direct quotation

Paraphrase is to present an original writer's ideas with different word choices and sometimes rearrangements of word/sentence order from an original text. Direct quotation is used when students want to retain the original wordings and form of the quoted texts. Students should be explicitly taught that the paraphrased portions must be adequate when they paraphrase. In other words, the meaning conveyed by the original author must be captured in essence and not distorted. Whenever students paraphrase or directly cite an original text, they need to acknowledge the original source both in the body of the essay and the reference list. Students should not only include the last name of the author and the year of the publication, but also the page number(s) if available. They should put direct quotation marks around the original texts. Students need to be explicitly taught that they cite or paraphrase for good reasons, such as to put their paper in a particular context, to define key terms to establish common ground between the reader and writer, to back up



Date: 27th February-2025

their own position, or sometimes to substantiate that opinions on a particular topic are divided so as to set the stage for further arguments.

Lexical variety

Lexical variety is an important part of successful writing because it can make an essay appear sophisticated and interesting. Lexical variety refers to “interesting word choice or effective use of vocabulary in writing” (Ferris, 2014, p. 89). Texts with greater lexical variety tend to score higher and leave a better impression with the readers. Students can consult a built-in thesaurus and dictionary in word processing software, consider the sentence context, and maintain a consistent level of formality if they want to improve lexical variety in their writing (Ferris, 2014, pp. 100-103). However, lexical variety alone is insufficient for creating a good essay. Other aspects such as content, development of ideas, quality of argumentation, correct use of grammar, and mechanics are equally important.

Passive voice

Teachers typically advise students against the passive voice in writing and advocate a rather purist use of the active voice. In academic writing, however, the passive voice can be preferred sometimes, at least for two reasons. First, appropriate use of the passive voice can enable writers to focus on a specific object for its importance, away from the actors who play a secondary role only. Ferris (2014) gave a good example to illustrate this point. “Conducted simultaneously in labs on four different continents, the experiment yielded results with international significance” (p. 175). In this example, the writer draws the reader’s attention to the experiment as a cornerstone of noteworthy results, independent of the actors who carried it out. A second reason for the use of the passive voice is to let writers deliberately distance themselves from their statements. By downplaying their identities through the passive voice, they could increase the statements’ objectivity, which is again often appropriate in scientific writing. Thinking processes: Information focused approach vs. knowledge transformation approach

The information-focused approach vs. the knowledge transformation approach to writing explains differences in the thinking processes used by novice vs. experienced writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) during different stages of their compositions. The information-focused approach is often used by novice writers, who have a tendency to note down all the facts and information they have about a topic, without establishing a focused macro rhetorical goal before they start to write. The macro rhetorical goal is something that a writer wants to achieve in his/her essay overall (Chandrasegaran & Schaezel, 2004, p. 46). It is a writer’s intention to perform a series of speech acts to influence the reader into thinking favourably of the writer’s thesis. It persuades the reader into agreeing that the thesis has been supported by the arguments and explanations put forth in the essay. We should let students know that the macro rhetorical goal is not the same as the thesis itself. The thesis refers to the main topic of the essay only.

The information-focused approach vs. the knowledge transformation approach differentiates the novice and experienced writers throughout different stages of the



Date: 27th February-2025

composition, from planning, to organizing, to writing/revising their essays. In the planning stage, novice writers tend to ask themselves: What they know about the topic, whether they have sufficient points for inclusion into the essay, where they can find more information, or how to make a piece of information relevant to the essay topic. On the contrary, experienced writers are more concerned about the rhetorical situation (i.e., purpose, audience, and context) in writing their particular piece. They think carefully about what information and rhetorical moves will best fit the rhetorical situation. This is to say, they consider and rank different pieces of information or moves in how they may help to achieve the macro rhetorical goal, and use this strategic thinking to guide the inclusion or rejection of materials.

In the organization stage, novice writers tend to present information in a chronological order. In contrast, experienced writers tend to consider how different organization of the information helps them fulfill their rhetorical goal. They make sure that the organization structure satisfies the rhetorical situation. They anticipate what the reader would like to know in their essays, or their possible agreement/disagreement with certain parts of the writing. In other words, in the writing process, they take into account proactively the reader's expectations and reactions.

In the writing/revising stage, novice writers often have difficulty in deciding what to say next (in the next sentence). They tend to re-read the previous sentence/clause before they decide how to proceed. They are usually too concerned about mistakes in grammar and spelling. Hence, they tend to use simple vocabulary and sentence structures. In general, they are likely to be preoccupied with the micro-level issues of writing. On the contrary, experienced writers, when deciding what to say next, refer to the macro rhetorical goal, which is at a strategic level that anticipates the reader's expectations and possible agreement/disagreement. They ensure that the organization and content will help them achieve the goal, and they choose words that are suitable for the overall rhetorical situation. They tend to re-organize or re-write texts in larger units (e.g., paragraphs) guided again by the macro rhetorical goal.

It should be noted that writers exhibit different thinking processes in the information-focused approach and the knowledge transformation approach to writing. In practice, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to observe how "novice writers make the cognitive transition to a knowledge transforming model, nor do they spell out whether the process is the same for all learners" (Hyland, 2011, p. 19). Depending on the genres, writers, even experienced ones, would sometimes make use of the information-focused approach simply because it is more suitable, e.g., when they write information reports or entries in an encyclopedia. In this kind of writing, the author's job is to explicate and pass on the information they know about their topics.

Structuring and developing argument at the macro and micro levels

From the previous section, we learn that an awareness to include information that suits the macro-rhetorical goal can help us structure and develop arguments at the broad discourse level of an essay. Apart from developing argument at the macro level, the



Date: 27th February-2025

Toulmin Model of Argumentation sheds light on how to structure arguments at the micro level. The elements in this model of argumentation include (i) claim – a statement that the arguer wants to show is true; (ii) data – the evidence offered in support of the claim; (iii) warrant – an assumption that underlies the claim; (iv) backing – evidence for the warrant; (v) qualifier – something which is added that in some way limits the applicability of scope of the claim; and (vi) reservation – a statement or a situation which, if true, renders the claim invalid (Toulmin, 1958). Teachers need to explicitly teach students how to structure and develop arguments at both the macro and micro levels of their essays.

Writing process

Traditionally, many writing teachers explicate the writing process as a linear process (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). For example, Paltridge, et al. (2009) identifies four distinct sub-processes in writing. First, in the conceptualizing stage, writers generate and select ideas that they can use in their writing, and organize the ideas in a neat way (e.g., an essay must have an introduction, body, and a conclusion). The second sub-process is called formulating, which means putting ideas into sentences. The third sub-process is revising, where writers rewrite and improve the essays. The revisions can be related to the content, grammar, and mechanics. The fourth sub-process is reading. Writers read the essay's instruction. They read to gather information for the essay topic. They re-read their writing to make sure that they are answering the essay's prompts. The linear process model may "underconceptualize and oversimplify" the writing process (Emig, 1971, p. 98). This oversimplification may be problematic because it can be inflexible and limits the freedom to explore, whereas writing in practice could be an unstructured process of self-discovery.

More recently, some writing scholars suggest that writing is a recursive, non-linear activity. Clark and Ivanič's (1991) work highlights that both novice and experienced writers go through various stages of the writing process several times and may not follow a fixed and particular order. Clark and Ivanič (1991) identify 16 (equally important and inter-related) stages of the writing process, involving the following: accumulating knowledge and opinions (e.g., doing the necessary reading to gather information about a particular topic, or gathering primary data through surveys and interviews to find out the participants' opinions on a particular topic); deciding how to take responsibility: whether to mask or declare the writer's own position (e.g., using first person pronouns vs. passive constructions in presenting the writer's view); analyzing the assignment (e.g., the question prompt and the instruction words, and the purpose of writing the assignment); planning (e.g., information to be included in the assignment so as to achieve the macro-rhetorical goal of the paper); establishing goals and purposes (e.g., setting the macro-rhetorical goal of the essay, and the goal of each paragraph); establishing the writer identity (e.g., showing the writer's commitment to a particular position/argument); drafting (e.g., putting together the ideas to construct an argument); considering constraints of time and space (e.g., deadline of submission of work and the word limit); formulating the writer's own ideas (e.g., the writer's own opinion on that particular topic); experiencing panic, pain, and anguish (e.g., going through the complicated and difficult process of writing); experiencing



Date: 27th February-2025

pleasure and satisfaction (e.g., finishing the assignment, and learning something new from the writing experience); revising (e.g., making sure that the arguments are persuasive, and the macro-rhetorical goal is achieved); considering the reader (e.g., making the writing reader-friendly and anticipating possible counter-arguments from the reader); clarifying writer commitment to his/her idea (e.g., confirming the writer's stance about a particular issue); putting knowledge of the language to use (e.g., choosing language that can help the writer achieve the macro-rhetorical goal of the paper); and making the copy neat (e.g., checking the overall presentation of the paper).

Writing Tasks

The Australian 'teaching and learning cycle' for genre instruction outlines the teaching of writing in three distinct stages: modelling, joint construction of text, and independent construction of text (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). At the modeling stage, teachers introduce the text type, purpose, audience, context of the text, as well as the vocabulary, grammar, and organizational structure, which are used in realizing that particular text type. For example, when teaching the genre of a complaint letter, teachers can make use of a short authentic letter from a local newspaper. Teachers can jumble the paragraphs, and then ask the students to rearrange the paragraphs and write down the proper order of a jumbled text following the situation-problem-solution-evaluation structure. Students can undertake this task individually if the class size is small, or in small groups when the class size is big.

After the modelling phase, teachers move on to another stage called the joint negotiation of text. This stage includes negotiation of ideas between teachers and students. Teachers can include activities such as class discussions and role plays, so as to help students brainstorm and gather possible ideas for writing. Teachers and students co-construct an essay in the same genre that they learned earlier in the modelling stage.

The stage of independent construction of text comes after the joint negotiation of text. Teachers should explicitly tell students the purpose of writing the particular essay, which may be neglected by some novice teachers. After brainstorming some ideas on the essay topic, students will independently compose their own essays. When the first draft is completed, teachers may conduct in-class trained peer review sessions and teacher-student conferencing sessions outside of classroom hours. These sessions are important because teachers and peer reviewers will be able to provide constructive feedback and suggestions to the student writers. Teachers must provide training to students before they conduct the peer reviews, as trained peer review feedback can positively affect the quality of post-revision drafts and the student-writers' revision types (Min, 2006). Student writers will be able to identify the areas of improvement, which they may act on when they revise their written work.

Enhancing Second Language Writing Performance

Students who are determined to improve the quality of their academic writing should be "prepared to change their habitual approach to writing" (Chandrasegaran, 2001, p. vi). In other words, some students would need to move away from the information



Date: 27th February-2025

focused approach to writing (i.e., merely giving information about what they know about the topic without considering the readers). Instead, they need to adopt an alternative approach to writing that emphasizes an awareness of the purpose and audience of the writing. Students would need to learn to become aware of the thinking processes that take place in the writing. Recent research has indicated that the socio-cognitive approach to writing can be effective in enhancing student performance in writing English as a second language. In the following, I will discuss practical strategies that teachers can introduce to students in the writing classroom with an objective to improving the students' performance in writing.

Using socio-cognitive approach to writing

Cognitive and genre theories are common approaches to teaching academic writing to students at upper primary and secondary schools, and in university-level ESL writing courses. However, the cognitive approach to teaching writing focuses on idea generation and planning strategies. This approach neglects socio-cultural factors, such as the target readers' possible reaction to texts (Hyland, 2002). The genre approach to teaching writing focuses on rhetorical moves and organization structure (Sawyer & Watson, 1989), rather than the thinking processes that are involved in the enactment of the discourse moves (Chandrasegaran, 2013). The prescriptive nature of a genre approach to writing may inhibit students' creativity (Hyland, 2002).

Motivated by the limitations of cognitive and genre approaches to writing pedagogy,

Chandrasegaran (2013) suggests a socio-cognitive approach to writing, which takes into account the socio-cultural contexts, thinking processes in enacting each genre practice, and reader expectations, to overcome the shortcomings of the cognitive and genre approaches. Studies have suggested that the use of a socio-cognitive approach to teaching writing has positive results in improving the students' writing. For example, Graham, Harris, & Mason (2005) pointed out that third-grade struggling students in the United States, who were explicitly taught the thinking processes and the structure of genres, wrote "longer, more complete, and qualitatively better" narratives and persuasive writing (p. 234). This is a result of the self-regulatory thinking processes embedded in the three-step planning strategies "Pick my ideas; Organize my notes; Write and say more" (p. 217), with peer support and collaboration in the planning stage. With explicit teaching of genre and a socio-cultural approach to writing, Chandrasegaran and Yeo (2006) found that Secondary three (i.e., ninth-grade) students in Singapore showed an improvement in writing narratives in terms of setting the rhetorical goal. In recent studies, Chandrasegaran (2013) and Chandrasegaran, Kong, and Chua (2007) found that secondary three (i.e., ninth-grade) students in a Singapore school improved in expository writing. Specifically, through teachers' guided class discussions and explicit teaching of thinking processes in the enactment of genre practices, the students raised their awareness of the social context of the texts, as well as reader and writer roles, and they showed improvements in discourse moves such as stating and elaborating claims as well as countering opposing views.



Date: 27th February-2025

Thinking processes, embedded in knowledge transformation, are important in implementing the socio-cognitive approach to writing. These thinking processes refer to how students plan, organize, write, and revise their essays. They help determine what information should be included in the essay in order to fit the macro rhetorical goal. Once the different pieces of information are determined, presenting them in a coherent form is a challenge to many students during the writing process. Understanding the features of a coherent text is the subject of the next section.

REFERENCES:

1. Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
2. Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). Negotiating the local in English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 26, 197-218.
3. Chandrasegaran, A. (2001). *Think your way to effective writing* (2nd ed.). Singapore: Prentice Hall.
4. Chandrasegaran, A. (2013). The effect of a socio-cognitive approach to teaching writing on stance support moves and topicality in students' expository essays. *Linguistics and Education*, 24(2), 101-111.
5. Chandrasegaran, A., Kong, C. K. M., & Chua, D. F. (2007). *Intervention in the teaching of expository writing*. Unpublished research report. Singapore: Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education.
6. Chandrasegaran, A., & Schaezel, K. (2004). *Think your way to effective writing* (3rd ed.). Singapore: Pearson/Prentice Hall. Chandrasegaran, A., & Yeo, S. C. (2006). Teaching character depiction in narrative writing. In T.S. C. Farrell (Ed.), *Language teacher research in Asia* (pp. 7-20). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
7. Cheung, Y. L. (2011). Teacher training for effective writing instruction: Recent trends and future directions. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal*, 15(1), 531-534.
8. Clark, R., & Ivanič, R. (1991). Consciousness-raising about the writing process. In C. James, & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Language awareness in the classroom* (pp. 168-185). London: Longman. 19
9. Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). Introduction: How a genre approach to literacy can transform the way writing is taught. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing* (pp. 1-21). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.
10. Crossley, S. A., Roscoe, R., & McNamara, D. S. (2014). What is successful writing? An investigation into the multiple ways writers can write successful essays. *Written Communication*, 31(2), 184-214.
11. Crossley, S. A., Weston, J., McLain Sullivan, S. T., & McNamara, D. S. (2011). The development of writing proficiency as a function of grade level: A linguistic analysis. *Written Communication*, 28(3), 282-311.
12. Emig, J. (1971). *The composing processes of twelfth graders*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.



Date: 27thFebruary-2025

13. Ferrari, M., Bouffard, T., & Rainville, L. (1998). What makes a good writer? Differences in good and poor writers' self-regulation of writing. *Instructional Science*, 26(6), 473-488.
14. Ferris, D. R. (2014). *Language power: Tutorials for writers*. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Mason, L. (2005). Improving the writing performance, knowledge, and self-efficacy of struggling young writers: The effects of self-regulated strategy-development. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 30(2), 207-241.
15. Grabe, W., & Kaplan, B. K. (1996). *Theory and practice of writing: An applied linguistic perspective*. New York: Longman.
16. Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and researching writing*. Harlow, UK: Pearson.
17. Hyland, K. (2011). Learning to write: issues in theory, research, and pedagogy. In R. M. Manchón (Ed.), *Learning-to-write and writing-to-learn in an additional language* (pp. 17-35). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
18. Hyon, S. (1996). Genres in three traditions: Implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(4), 693-722.
19. Johns, A. M. (1986). Coherence and Academic Writing: Some Definitions and Suggestions for Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(2), 247-265.
20. Lee, I. (2002). Teaching coherence to ESL students: a classroom inquiry. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 11(2), 135-159

